

"How to Solve Problems", Part 1 – Galatians 2:1-5 – July 23rd, 2017

- Today's teaching will be part one of a new series I've titled, "How to Solve Problems."
- In our text today, the Apostle Paul is confronting a serious problem with respect to the churches there in the region of Galatia.
- Namely, that of the Judaizers worming their way into these churches and confusing them with a false gospel of faith and works.
- What we're about to see is Paul, true to form, hitting the problem head-on and in so doing providing us with a template of sorts.
- As such, this template will give us practical ways to solve the relational problems that we face in our daily lives as Christians.
- My prayer for this teaching series is that we can experience first hand the power of the practical application of the Word of God.

1. Tact (Verses 1-2)

1 Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.

- After saying he went to Jerusalem 3-years when he met Jesus on the Damascus road, 14-years later he makes a second trip.
- He then explains that he went in response to a revelation, and to privately present the gospel to those esteemed as leaders.
- Then he very interestingly tells them that he wanted to be sure that he was not running nor had been running his race in vain.

- To say what Paul does here is both tactful and remarkable would be a gross understatement, and this for a number of reasons.
- Chiefly because, Paul, being both led by, and filled with, the Holy Spirit, does the right thing, and he does it in the right way.
- By that I mean Paul could have confronted them publically, instead of meeting with them and communicating to them privately.

- The question becomes why? Why does Paul use such tact? The answer is actually twofold, first to avoid unnecessary conflict.
- Had he come in hot, so-to-speak, with all guns blazing, he would have added another log to the fire that was already burning.
- As one commentator aptly noted, "Paul didn't do this because he knew being right did not give him the privilege of being rude."

Proverbs 26:20–21 (NKJV) — 20 Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. 21 As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.

Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV) — 1 A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 25:15 (NKJV) — 15 By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, And a gentle tongue breaks a bone.

- A second reason as to why Paul wisely uses such tact is that had he not, damage to his reputation and ministry may ensue.
- This explains why he says that he wanted to be sure that he was not running his race, nor had been running his race in vain.
- In other words, had he done the right thing in the wrong way and with the wrong heart, it would have marred the work he did.

2. Discernment (Verses 3-5)

3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. 4 This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. 5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

- In verses 3-5, Paul tells them that not even Titus who was with him, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.
- He says that this matter arose due to some false believers infiltrating their ranks undetected to spy on their freedom in Christ.
- Paul then tells them that they didn't give into them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for them.

- This is one of those places where we need a bit of the back-story for the sake of context, so we have a better understanding.
- It's important to note that Titus was a Gentile, which was why he wasn't circumcised as a requirement of the Law of Moses.
- The problem was that there were those in Jerusalem who were requiring that Titus submit to this to show his real commitment.

- It's for this reason that Paul outs them by exposing them as the legalists they were saying they infiltrated the church as spies.
- As one commentator said it, "They crept in to spy on the liberty of Paul Titus and Barnabas-not to celebrate it but to regulate it.
- I suppose you could say they didn't know who they were up against, such that Paul not only discerns it, he doesn't give in to it.
- By the way, Paul doesn't only discern it and not give in to it, when we get to chapter 5; he's downright blunt and harsh about it.

Gal 5:11-12 11 Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

- Lest one think that Paul is being disproportionately harsh in confronting them, let me hasten to say that he knows what's at risk.
- Actually, notice that he refers to this at the end of verse five where he says that at risk was preserving the truth of the gospel.
- In other words, the stakes were so high, that the truth of the gospel was in jeopardy of being compromised and even corrupted.
- Had Paul not tackled this serious problem as he did, the church was in danger of being brought back into bondage to the law.
- I would suggest that this danger of legalism is alive and well in the church today, and left unchecked it can do unthinkable harm.
- Kindly allow me to close by way of an illustration that I think would be apropos in giving us something to take home with us.
- Let's say that you're in a conversation with several Christians and someone says, "I don't have a TV, I got rid of that sinfulness."
- How will you respond? Will you tactfully, perhaps privately communicate to them the legalistic danger it poses to the believer?
- Or would you acquiesce to the legalist under the banner of not having a TV being a requirement for a more righteous Christian?